

WHEELER, G.A. 1986. Two new species of *Carex* (Cyperaceae) from austral South America and additional taxonomic and phytogeographical notes on the genus. *Brittonia* 38:317–324.

\_\_\_\_\_. In press. A new species of *Carex* sect. *Junciformes* (Cyperaceae) from austral South America and notes on the sectional placement of *C. sorianoi*. *Syst. Bot.*

#### REVIEW

ARONSON, J. K. 1985. An account of the foxglove and its medical uses, 1785 – 1985. 399 pp. Oxford University Press, New York. ISBN 0-19-261501-7. Hardbound, \$45.00.

The first part of the book is a facsimile of William Withering's monograph *An Account of the Foxglove and some of its Medical Uses: with Practical Remarks on Dropsy, and other Diseases* to which the author has added annotations that help to elucidate certain aspects of that time period in relation to current conditions.

The second half of the book is an account of the history of the use of the digitalis glycosides and related compounds over the last 200 years. "I have hoped thereby to learn something about how modern practice has been influenced and about what we can learn about our own practices through a knowledge of the previous habits of others." (Preface)

The second half is divided into Part I, II, & III. Part I is the Introduction with Chapter 1 entitled "The Foxglove as Flower and Herb." Sections within Chapter 1 are: The Botany of Foxgloves, Terminology, Naming the Flower, The Foxglove in Literature, The Cardiac Glycosides in *Digitalis* Plants, The Pharmacology of Digitoxin and its influence on Withering's Methods of Treatment with the Foxglove, and Digitalis Toxicity. Chapter 2, "Uses of the Foxglove before Withering," includes topics on: Use of the Foxglove in Tuberculosis, Use of the Foxglove in Epilepsy, and Use of the Foxglove in Dropsies.

Part II, "William Withering of Birmingham", begins with Chapter 3 by the same title with a biographical sketch. The next section discusses "Withering's Other Scientific Activities" followed by "Withering's Character" and a "Chronology of Withering's Life and Publications." Chapter 4: "Withering's Discovery and Use of the Foxglove," Chapter 5: "Attitudes to the Use of the Foxglove in Withering's Lifetime".

Part III, "Attitudes to the Foxglove after Withering's Death" begins with Chapter 6 entitled "The Nineteenth Century," Chapter 7, "The Twentieth Century, 1900 to 1950," Chapter 8, "The Twentieth Century from 1950," and Chapter 9, "Envoi," followed by the bibliography and three indices.

In the preface the author states that he wrote this book to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the publication in 1785 of Withering's monograph. "Withering's *Account of the Foxglove* is the first English text in which the therapeutic effects of a drug are described in detail and its therapeutic usefulness discussed. I believe that it stands as a model for all subsequent such accounts, given the state of the practice of medicine at the time in which it was written, and it deserves commemoration as such."

This book is interesting and readable for anyone interested in the history of the trials and tribulations of the numerous endeavors encountered from the leaf harvest to the final manufacture of the drugs. With the same drug content, various altered formulations resulted in different absorption rates and finally to the introduction of pharmacopoeial standards for the manufacturers.—WFM